



ZINES IN THE CLASSROOM

PETAL Faculty Showcase Learning Circle 2025

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THE MULTIMODAL TURN IN EDUCATION

- We're increasingly being asked to help our students learn to communicate in ways beyond the traditional essay or research paper
- Many of us turn to the in-class PowerPoint presentation
- The issue with many multimodal projects these days, including PowerPoint, is that students can either use a template or straight up have AI design the entire thing.
- But, if you part of your goal is for students to think critically about audience, language, visuals, messaging and how to get all of that across successfully while having fun, creative flexibility, then the **Zine** is a great choice

The Daily Tar Heel

PDFClick
Convert PDFs in Seconds

LIFESTYLE

A history of zines, from political activism to creative expression



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KC By Kathryn Church
October 2, 2023

Zines evade strict definitions. They are journals with stapled and glued ephemera. They are digital collages. They are small poetry anthologies and folded pieces of paper full of doodles.

Pronounced as in "magazines," zines are roughly described as self-published DIY booklets that feature — often underrepresented — personal, social or political expressions.

"It was, in its origins, about radical communication and dissemination of information," zine artist and UNC alumnus Sam Levi Middleton-Sizemore said. "So civil rights movements, the feminist movement, the early gay liberation movement, all used zines."

Because of their loose definition, zines can look as experimental, professional or messy as an artist likes. Their messages, like their media, come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from music reviews to quirky satires and political calls to action.

They also provide a means for creating networks between underrepresented groups, according to Josh Hockensmith, the interim head of the Sloane Art Library at UNC, which has its own collection of contemporary zines.

"They tend to be about building communities and reaching out to people with similar interests, where you're not finding that kind of network otherwise," he said.

The namesake of today's zines is the 1930s science fiction fanzine that featured sci-fi comics and letters to authors, but comparable magazines have existed as early as the 1920s through Black

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"Zines also have roots in the informal, underground publications that focused on social and political activism in the '60s. By the '70s, zines were popular on the punk rock circuit. In the '90s, the feminist punk scene propelled the medium and included such artists as Kathleen Hanna, who produced riot grrrl out of Olympia, Washington."

HISTORY OF ZINES

The Westport Library...

The Westport Library / The Westport Library Resource Guides / Zine Activism / No-Filter Feminism

Zine Activism: No-Filter Feminism

Search this Guide Search

Zine Activism

What is a Zine?

Zines can be difficult to define. The word "zine" is a shortened form of the term fanzine, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Fanzines emerged as early as the 1930s among fans of science fiction. Zines also have roots in the informal, underground publications that focused on social and political activism in the '60s. By the '70s, zines were popular on the punk rock circuit. In the '90s, the feminist punk scene propelled the medium and included such artists as Kathleen Hanna, who produced riot grrrl out of Olympia, Washington.

A zine is most commonly a small circulation publication of original or appropriated texts and images. More broadly, the term encompasses any self-published unique work of minority interest, usually reproduced via photocopier. A popular definition includes that circulation must be 5,000 or less, although in practice the significant majority are produced in editions of less than 1,000. Profit is not the primary intent of publication. There are so many types of zines: art and photography zines, literary zines, social and political zines, music zines, perzines (personal zines), travel zines, health zines, food zines. And the list goes on and on. [Continue reading from UTexas](#)

What is Riot Grrrl?

The emergence of the Riot Grrrl movement began in the early 1990s, when a group of women in Olympia, Washington, held a meeting to discuss how to address sexism in the punk scene. The women decided they wanted to start a "girl riot" against a society they felt offered no validation of women's experiences. And thus the Riot Grrrl movement was born. The Riot Grrrl movement believed in girls actively engaging in cultural production, creating their own music and fanzines rather than following existing materials. The bands associated with Riot Grrrl used their music to express feminist and anti-racist viewpoints. Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, and Heavens to Betsy created songs with extremely personal lyrics that dealt with topics such as rape, incest and eating disorders.

By the late '90s, "girl power," a slogan that began in the pages of Riot Grrrl zines, started being appropriated by pop sensations like the Spice Girls. Some claim this to be the end of the movement. Others contend that it never ended and that bands like Pussy Riot are still carrying the torch today. [Continue reading from NYPL](#)

Watch Videos on Zine Activism

Riot Grrrl Activism through Art and Zine

OUTPUNK

Watch on YouTube

Riot Grrrl: The '90s Movement that Redefined Punk

Watch on YouTube

GRITTV: Kathleen Hanna: Zines and Blo...

Watch later Share

MANY BENEFITS OF ZINES!

1. Introduce students to the resources available to them on campus (Kislak center)
2. Introduce them to the history of underground communication and engage in discussions about censorship
3. Allow students to be as analog or digital as they want.
4. Produce a physical manifestation of their work, something to hold & keep, to pass around the room – we do a zine showcase

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I have students browse through the UM Library's collection of Zines.

They must pick a couple of titles that look interesting (and that are copy-heavy), read/skim through them, and be prepared to discuss which ones they looked through & what they noticed about them (style, content, imagery, etc.).

<https://digitalcollections.library.miami.edu/digital/collection/zines>

We also do a trip to the Kislak Center!

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I give a PowerPoint on the history of underground/ samizdat communication & discussion questions on how to communicate in the face of media and literary oppression

[PPT on Fascism, Censorship & Underground Communication](#)

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HOW CAN WE INCORPORATE THE ZINE INTO OUR CLASSES?

The zine can be an entire research project—which is what I do—or it can be a small mini-lesson, or a way to reflect on something that they learned in class.

Brief timeline of a full Zine project

Pre-project work: Readings and discussions about the topic they will be researching (1-2 weeks)

Week 1: Background: Students read background articles on the history of zines; do PowerPoint on the history of and need for underground communication in the face of oppression; look at the University of Miami's online zine collection; visit the Kislak center

Week 2: Work on annotated bibliography and research proposal

Week 3: Work on Zines in class

Week 4: Zine showcase

[Zine Final Project](#)

ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

Discussion Questions

- What multimodal projects do you already do with your students? What has gone well about them, and what limitations or drawbacks did you face?
- Can you imagine using zines in your classroom? Why might it be appealing? What can such a project offer to you and your students?
- What might a shorter zine assignment look like (one that does not take the place of an entire research paper)?

Activity:

Think of a lesson you already do in your classroom. How might you add a zine component to it?